

Assemblyman **PAUL KORETZ**

Forty-second Assembly District

proudly representing the communities of West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, Century City, Westwood, Bel Air, Brentwood, West Los Angeles, Hollywood, Hancock Park, Universal City, Studio City, and Sherman Oaks



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Koretz Introduces Bill Preventing Employers from Locking In Workers Overnight

Offers to Assist any California Workers Affected by Lock-In Policies

(Sacramento) - Assemblyman Paul Koretz, Chair of the Assembly Labor and Employment Committee, announced today that he has introduced AB 2545, which seeks to promote safe work environments. The bill prohibits employers from locking in workers at their place of employment and prohibits providing only emergency exits as the exclusive means of exiting the workplace.

"Any policy requiring workers to be trapped at work is an inherent risk to their lives," said Assemblyman Koretz. "Workers should not have to suffer the indignity and danger of being locked in at their job," he said.

AB 2545, jointly authored by Assemblywoman Sally Lieber, prohibits employers from physically preventing an employee from exiting a place of business by locking the doors, windows, or other exits of the place of employment. This bill provides that it is insufficient for an employer to provide only emergency exits for use by its employees. Under this bill, an employer may lock one or more entrance provided that they may be opened from the inside by employees while required to be on the premises.

Recent news articles have exposed a reported policy used by Wal-Mart and its subsidiary, Sam's Club, throughout the country. As part of this reported policy, employees are locked-in overnight and provided only emergency exits as means of exiting the place of employment. In recent incidents, Sam's Club employees in Texas and Colorado were allegedly injured on the job, only to have medical attention delayed for hours by the lock-in policy. Other workers are claiming to have been locked-in without a manager to release them in an emergency. The workers also say that use of emergency exits for non-emergency uses was strongly discouraged by management. Additionally, Wal-Mart employees in several states have alleged that managers locked the front door and prevented workers, even those who had clocked out, from leaving the job.

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"The issue of locked-in workers cannot be ignored," states Assemblywoman Sally Lieber (D-San Jose). "No California worker should be cheated out of mandatory breaks or remain injured, without access to medical care, because they are locked in a store."

Currently, there is no federal law that bans an employer from locking in workers at the job. However, a few states have adopted legislation to curb the practice.

"This bill will prevent unscrupulous employers from trapping their employees on the job, especially when they need medical or emergency attention", added Assemblyman Koretz. "These alleged lock-in policies are something out of the 19th century. In this day and age, such draconian and dangerous employment practices are intolerable. California workers deserve the absolute safest possible working environments, and AB 2545 will help achieve that."

Since there may be wage and hour violations associated with an employer's lock-in policy, Assemblyman Koretz encourages employees to contact the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement (888) 275-9243 with any complaints. Assemblyman Koretz wants to ensure that California employees have been properly compensated where any such lock-in policies have been applied.

Also, Assemblyman Koretz will assist any California worker affected by a policy of locking employees at their place of employment. Employees who have been victimized by a lock-in policy can contact his the Assembly Labor and Employment Committee at (916) 319-2091. The Assemblyman will then forward such complaints to the Labor Commissioner for investigation to ensure that existing wage/hour laws are not being violated.

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